

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A contents-information transmission system comprising:  
a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of  
5 different levels of at least one of copyright protection and  
information secrecy is assigned;  
an authentication apparatus;  
means for transmitting said one of the different levels from  
the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication  
10 apparatus;  
means provided in the authentication apparatus for comparing  
said transmitted one of the different levels with a predetermined  
reference level; and  
means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission  
15 of contents information from the authentication apparatus to the  
contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of  
said comparing.
2. An authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-  
20 information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at  
least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is  
assigned, the authentication apparatus comprising:  
means for receiving said one of the different levels from the  
contents-information handling apparatus;  
25 means for comparing said received one of the different levels  
with a predetermined reference level; and

means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said comparing.

5     3.     An authentication apparatus as recited in claim 2, wherein said one of the different levels is represented by copyrighted data.

4.     In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different  
10    levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication apparatus deciding a level of the contents-information handling apparatus which relates to at least one of copyright protection and  
15    information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to said decided level; the contents-information handling apparatus comprising:

20         means for storing data representative of said one of the different levels; and

       means for transmitting the data representative of said one of the different levels to the authentication apparatus.

25     5.     A contents-information handling apparatus as recited in claim 4, wherein said data comprise copyrighted data.

6. A method of data transmission between an authentication apparatus and a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus;

10 comparing said transmitted one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and

selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said

15 comparing.

7. A method as recited in claim 6, wherein said one of the different levels is represented by copyrighted data.

20 8. A method as recited in claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting predetermined data from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus; and

transmitting said one of the different levels from the

25 contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus in response to the predetermined data received by the

contents-information handling apparatus.

9. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different  
5 levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, and an authentication apparatus deciding a level of the contents-information handling apparatus which relates to at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting  
10 transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to said decided level; a transmission medium comprising:

means for connecting the contents-information handling apparatus and the authentication apparatus with each other;  
15 means for enabling said one of the different levels to be transmitted from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus; and  
means for enabling the contents information to be transmitted from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information  
20 handling apparatus.

10. A contents-information transmission system comprising:  
a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information  
25 secrecy;  
an authentication apparatus;

means for transmitting data representative of said capability from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is copyrighted;

- 5 means provided in the authentication apparatus for judging the data transmitted from the contents-information handling apparatus; and

means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of second contents information from the authentication apparatus to  
10 the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said judging.

11. An authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least  
15 one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus comprising:

means for receiving data representative of said capability from the contents-information handling apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is copyrighted;

- 20 means for judging the received data; and

means for selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of second contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said judging.

- 25 12. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability

regarding at least one of copyright protection and information  
secrecy, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the  
contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication  
apparatus deciding whether or not the contents-information

- 5 handling apparatus has a capability regarding at least one of  
copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication  
apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of first  
contents information to the contents-information handling  
apparatus in response to a result of said deciding; the contents-  
10 information handling apparatus comprising:

means for storing data representative of said capability of the  
contents-information handling apparatus, the data containing  
second contents information which is copyrighted; and

- 15 means for transmitting the data to the authentication  
apparatus.

13. A method of data transmission between an authentication  
apparatus and a contents-information handling apparatus having a  
capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and  
20 information secrecy, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting data representative of said capability from the  
contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication  
apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is  
copyrighted;

- 25 judging the data transmitted from the contents-information  
handling apparatus; and

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transmitting the data representative of the capability from the contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication apparatus in response to the predetermined data received by the contents-information handling apparatus.

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means for connecting the contents-information handling apparatus and the authentication apparatus with each other;

means for enabling data representative of the capability of the contents-information handling apparatus to be transmitted to the authentication apparatus, the data containing second contents information which is copyrighted; and

- 5           means for enabling the first contents information to be transmitted from the authentication apparatus to the contents-information handling apparatus.

16.   A reliability deciding apparatus for deciding a reliability of an  
10   object apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, the reliability deciding apparatus comprising:

          means for transmitting predetermined data to the object apparatus;

- 15           means for receiving response data from the object apparatus as a reply to the transmission of the predetermined data;

          means for storing information representing a plurality of public keys corresponding to the different reliabilities respectively;

- means for selecting one from among the public keys and  
20   decrypting the response data into a decryption-resultant data in accordance with the selected public key;

          means for deciding whether or not the predetermined data and the decryption-resultant data are equal to each other; and

- means for, when it is decided that the predetermined data  
25   and the decryption-resultant data are equal to each other, deciding that a reliability of the object apparatus is equal to one of the



different reliabilities which corresponds to the selected public key.

17. A reliability decided apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, wherein a  
5 reliability of the reliability decided apparatus is decided by a reliability deciding apparatus, the reliability decided apparatus comprising:

means for receiving predetermined data from the reliability deciding apparatus;

10 means for storing information of a secret key corresponding to specified one of the different reliabilities;

means for encrypting the predetermined data into encryption-resultant data in response to the secret key; and

15 means for transmitting the encryption-resultant data to the reliability deciding apparatus.

18. A reliability deciding apparatus for deciding a reliability of an object apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, the reliability deciding apparatus  
20 comprising:

means for transmitting predetermined data to the object apparatus;

25 means for receiving response data from the object apparatus as a reply to the transmission of the predetermined data, the response data containing a data piece peculiar to the object apparatus;

means for storing a plurality of reference data pieces  
corresponding to the different reliabilities respectively;

means for extracting the peculiar data piece from the  
response data;

5 means for selecting one from among the reference data pieces  
and deciding whether or not the selected reference data piece and  
the extracted peculiar data piece are equal to each other; and

means for, when it is decided that the selected reference data  
piece and the extracted peculiar data piece are equal to each other,  
10 deciding that a reliability of the object apparatus is equal to one of  
the different reliabilities which corresponds to the selected  
reference data piece.

19. A reliability decided apparatus to which one of different  
15 reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, wherein a  
reliability of the reliability decided apparatus is decided by a  
reliability deciding apparatus, the reliability decided apparatus  
comprising:

means for receiving predetermined data from the reliability  
20 deciding apparatus;

means for storing a data piece which is peculiar to the  
reliability decided apparatus, and which corresponds to specified  
one of the different reliabilities;

means for encrypting the predetermined data into  
25 encryption-resultant data in response to the data piece; and

means for transmitting the encryption-resultant data to the

reliability deciding apparatus.

20. A reliability deciding apparatus for deciding a reliability of an object apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding  
5 information secrecy is assigned, the reliability deciding apparatus comprising:

means for transmitting predetermined data to the object apparatus;

means for receiving response data from the object apparatus  
10 as a reply to the transmission of the predetermined data, the response data containing a data piece peculiar to the object apparatus;

means for decrypting the response data into decryption-resultant data;

15 means for extracting the peculiar data piece from the decryption-resultant data;

means for executing predetermined calculation between the extracted peculiar data piece and the predetermined data to generate a calculation-resultant data piece;

20 means for compressing the calculation-resultant data piece into a compression-resultant data piece according to a predetermined function;

means for storing a plurality of reference data pieces corresponding to the different reliabilities respectively;

25 means for processing the reference data pieces into respective processing-resultant data pieces according to the

predetermined function;

means for selecting one from among the processing-resultant data pieces and deciding whether or not the selected processing-resultant data piece and the compression-resultant data piece are  
5 equal to each other; and

means for, when it is decided that the selected processing-resultant data piece and the compression-resultant data piece are equal to each other, deciding that a reliability of the object apparatus is equal to one of the different reliabilities which  
10 corresponds to the selected processing-resultant data piece.

21. A reliability decided apparatus to which one of different reliabilities regarding information secrecy is assigned, wherein a reliability of the reliability decided apparatus is decided by a  
15 reliability deciding apparatus, the reliability decided apparatus comprising:

means for receiving predetermined data from the reliability deciding apparatus;

means for storing a peculiar data piece which is peculiar to  
20 the reliability decided apparatus, and which corresponds to specified one of the different reliabilities;

means for encrypting the predetermined data into encryption-resultant data in response to the peculiar data piece;

means for compressing the peculiar data piece into a  
25 compression-resultant data piece according to a predetermined function;

means for combining the encryption-resultant data and the compression-resultant data piece into response data; and

means for transmitting the response data to the reliability deciding apparatus.

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22. A recording medium storing a computer program for controlling an authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, the computer program comprising the steps of receiving said one of the different levels from the contents-information handling apparatus; comparing said received one of the different levels with a predetermined reference level; and selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said comparing.

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23. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus to which one of different levels of at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy is assigned, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication apparatus deciding a level of the contents-information handling apparatus which relates to at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of contents information to

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the contents-information handling apparatus in response to said decided level; a recording medium storing a computer program for controlling the contents-information handling apparatus, the computer program comprising the step of transmitting data  
5 representative of said one of the different levels to the authentication apparatus.

24. A recording medium storing a computer program for controlling an authentication apparatus connectable with a contents-  
10 information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, the computer program comprising the steps of receiving data representative of said capability from the contents-information handling apparatus, the data containing first contents information which is copyrighted;  
15 judging the received data; and selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of second contents information to the contents-information handling apparatus in response to a result of said judging.

20 25. In a contents-information transmission system comprising a contents-information handling apparatus having a capability regarding at least one of copyright protection and information secrecy, and an authentication apparatus connectable with the contents-information handling apparatus, the authentication  
25 apparatus deciding whether or not the contents-information handling apparatus has a capability regarding at least one of

copyright protection and information secrecy, the authentication  
apparatus selectively permitting and inhibiting transmission of first  
contents information to the contents-information handling  
apparatus in response to a result of said deciding; a recording  
5 medium storing a computer program for controlling the contents-  
information handling apparatus, the computer program comprising  
the step of transmitting data representative of said capability of the  
contents-information handling apparatus to the authentication  
apparatus, the data containing second contents information which is  
10 copyrighted.